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AN OVER VIEW OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF SKILLS NEEDED FOR LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS

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Abstract

Need for different types of Skills for the Library professional is a crucial element in ensuring efficient library services to users. A staff component needs to be exposed to relevant training and skill development programmes. This paper will explore the need and the different types of skills required by the library professional in rendering effective services to its users in this dynamic working environment.

Keywords : *Skills development, academic libraries, performance management process.*

Introduction

The 20th century has seen a dramatic growth of technological development in various fields. Libraries have changed from mere static store house of knowledge to dynamic information service centres. The role of library professionals is also subject to dramatic changes. Today the word 'library' itself is being replaced by the term 'information centre' and the word 'Librarian' is replaced by different terms such as Information Educator, Information Researcher, Information Manager, Information Analyst, Information Distributor. Therefore librarians need to have the knowledge of various skills that are needed while performing these different roles. Training and the need for skills development programmes at different

levels is necessary to provide better and efficient services.

Definition

Skill is an ability or proficiency in execution or performance, which is required for a person to plan and execute an action designed to achieve some goals or accomplish a particular task. A skilled person has the ability to perform any task successfully (Mazumdar, 2007).

Need and Purpose of the different types of skills

It is extremely important for an individual at workplace to have knowledge of various skills including both technical and coordination skills. These qualities matters a lot in the work environment as the job responsibilities also demands that candidate's posses certain set of skills, character traits and attitudes. This mainly includes organising skills, ability to follow instructions, getting the work done as per the set time frame, critical thinking and communication and research skills. As library service caters to the requirement of multiple users of different ages, the most powerful instrument we have in helping our patrons is our skills. To fulfil this function it is very important that we have knowledge about good level of various skills. "Libraries are storehouse of knowledge and without educated, well-trained, and motivated librarians and library staff, an academic library will not serve its basic purpose to meet the needs of its clientele" (Kumaresan, 2002).

Purpose of the different types of skills

- 1) To help the professionals to keep abreast with the latest development in profession.
- 2) To adjust with the changing professional growth
- 3) To contribute in the personal and professional growth
- 4) To disseminate new ideas
- 5) To provide better information service to the users

The different types of skills needed for library professionals

1) **Listening skills:** The library professionals must have good listening skills as he/she has to interact with different types of users all the time. It is through the art of careful listening one can able to understand the information need of users.

2) **Communications skills:** Good communication skills is require for understanding the patrons information need and providing the services accordingly.

3) **Interpersonal skills:** To deal with different users and also to work in groups it is necessary to have good amount of interpersonal skills. It is useful in large library to build rapport with all departments, which helps in managing the library and providing better services to every one.

4) **Public relations:** This is important inorder to create good image of the library. It helps in creating good bond with users and vendors.

- 5) **User service:** Librarians has to satisfy the information needs of the users by providing services through CAS, SDI or other specialized services. This service emphasizes the user satisfaction.
- 6) **Leadership skills & Teamwork:** In large libraries team work is the most important factor, therefore leadership skill is needed to guide the team from time to time for getting work done from the team. Team work and leadership skills are essential for smooth functioning of the library.
- 7) **Writing skills:** Librarians are sometimes asked to help in preparing business proposal or project report, or to assist in writing research proposals which requires good writing skills. Many library professionals are also contributing to various publications with the help of their writing skills.
- 8) **Project management skills:** Nowadays Librarians need to handle various projects such as digital institutional repository. These require dedication, understanding of the project, time management for completion of work, teamwork and reporting back the results etc. Therefore project management skill is needed.
- 9) **Presentation skills:** The presentation skills is needed in report writing, library committee meetings and even in daily work. It implies library presentation by means of its decoration, users guides, and library ambience.
- 10) **Teaching skills:** This skill is essential for orienting new users in the library. It is also essential in case if a new services is introduced in the library e.g online database searching. It also includes cultivating reading habits among users.
- 11) **Leadership and Management Skills:** Leadership skills such as influencing and motivating others to strive for excellence; able to adapt to a variety of working or learning styles, scenarios and organizational cultures and to lead change within the organization understanding of how to assess the need for and to plan and implement new services and/or resources in light of current and anticipated needs.
- 12) **Risk management and Decision Management skills:** This skills emphasis the pros and cons of any action or decision taken which directly or indirectly effects the smooth functioning of the library. It implies planning, organizing and managing resources to successfully complete the objective of project with in the certain time frame. It also includes understanding the concepts and methods for service, resource and project evaluation and outcomes assessment.

13) Collections Development Skills: It implies understanding the concepts, issues and methods related to the acquisition, and disposition of resources, including knowing collection strengths and library and institutional goals and objectives for resource development.

14) Digital Preservation Skills: Knowledge about best practices for the selection, collection, preservation, description, organization, and archiving principles for digital documentation. preservation methods for general collections and for rare books and archives. It is essential for digitizing the rare collections and preserving a copy to make it accessible for future generations.

15) Research & Contributions to the Profession Skills: This skills implies contributions through writing, editing, refereeing or reviewing of books, articles or reports, contributions through presentations in conferences, scholarly associations or meetings and workshops etc.

16) Conference management: This skills includes planning, organizing or conducting professional programs, workshops, seminars or conferences, active participation in professional associations and ability to keep oneself abreast of latest development in the area of research in a specific subject.

17) Information Technology Skills: This includes knowledge about Integrated library systems (ILS) – knowledge of basic structure, content and use of an integrated library system, knowledge of major trends in web development including online social networking tools include Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, etc, knowledge of how digital resources are acquired, managed and accessed (Farkas, 2006)

18) Web page development: It implies understanding of principles of web page design and maintenance, Understanding the basic structure, content and use of campus institutional repositories, knowing the structure and use of Learning management system, understanding how databases are designed and structured for convenient data and information retrieval.

Conclusion

There is maximum need for the skill enhancement programmes of the library staff. Besides academic institutions, other organisations may also help in enhancing the skills of the library professionals. Along with the potential working skills, the library professionals should have positive attitude towards their work for the benefit of institutions. Inlibnet plays an active role in organising various training and skills development programmes related to software packages of LMS. Indian Association for Special Libraries and Information Centre (IASLIC) is also working for improving the technical efficiency of the library and information professionals. NISCAIR organizes different IT related short term courses for enhancing skills among library professionals. NISSAT encourages and supports variety of

skills development programmes for library and information professionals on CDS/ISIS, WINIISIS, TQM, Internet and web design etc. DESIDOC and NASSDOC are two national documentation centres also arranges different short term training programmes for the professionals to acquaint them with the latest development in information and communication technology and its application to the library and information centres. These types of practical-oriented skill enhancement programmes are very necessary for the library staffs, which can introduce them with advanced technology and refresh and retrained them with various technological skills.

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**STATUS OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN
THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA**

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